WELCOME TO COMIC STRIP HELL!
DC
#1
JUN 03
SWEATSHOP
BY
PETER BAGGE
STEPHEN DESTEFANO
AND BILL WRAY
P.BAGGE '02
DIRECT SALES
$2.95 US $4.95 CAN
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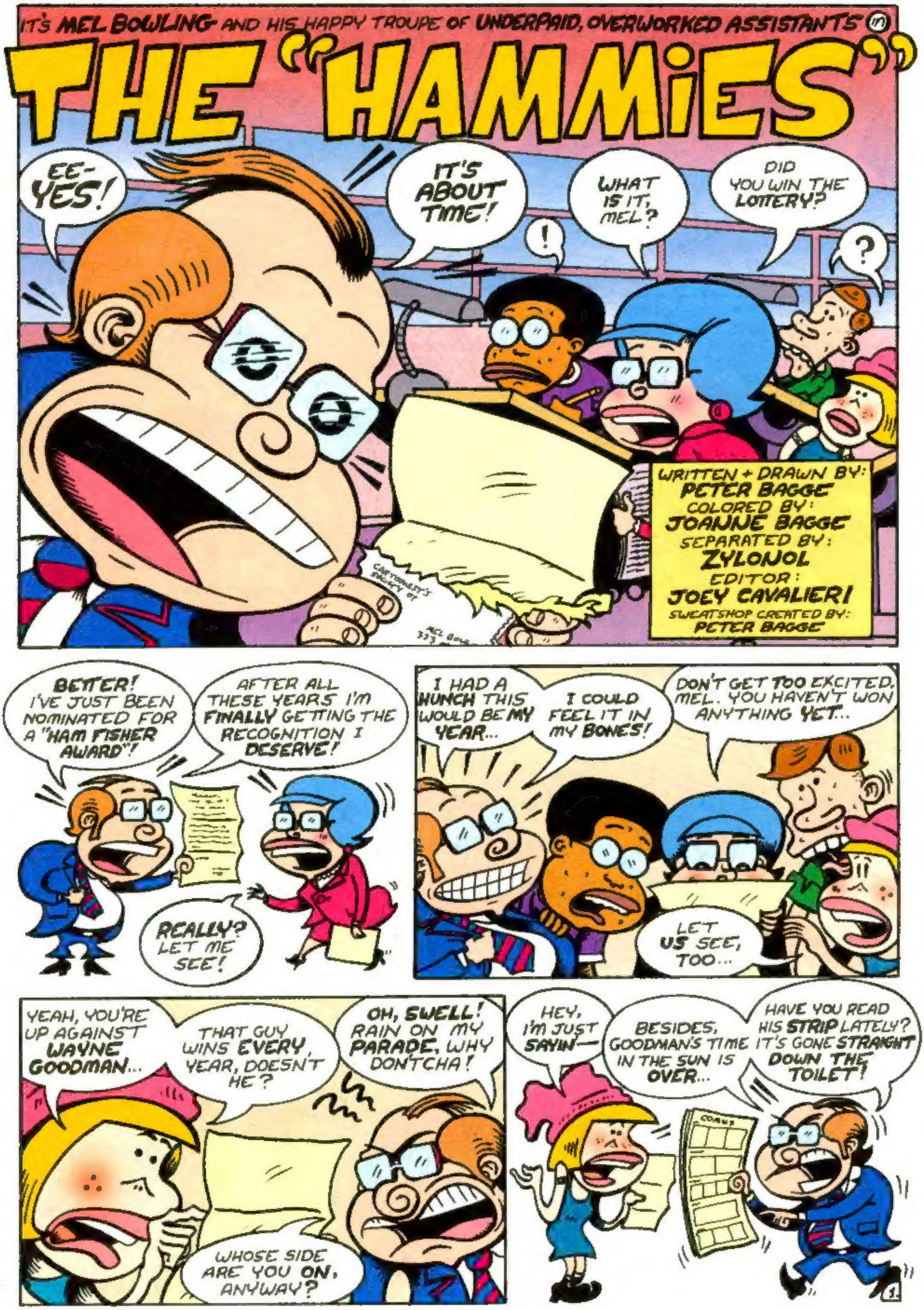
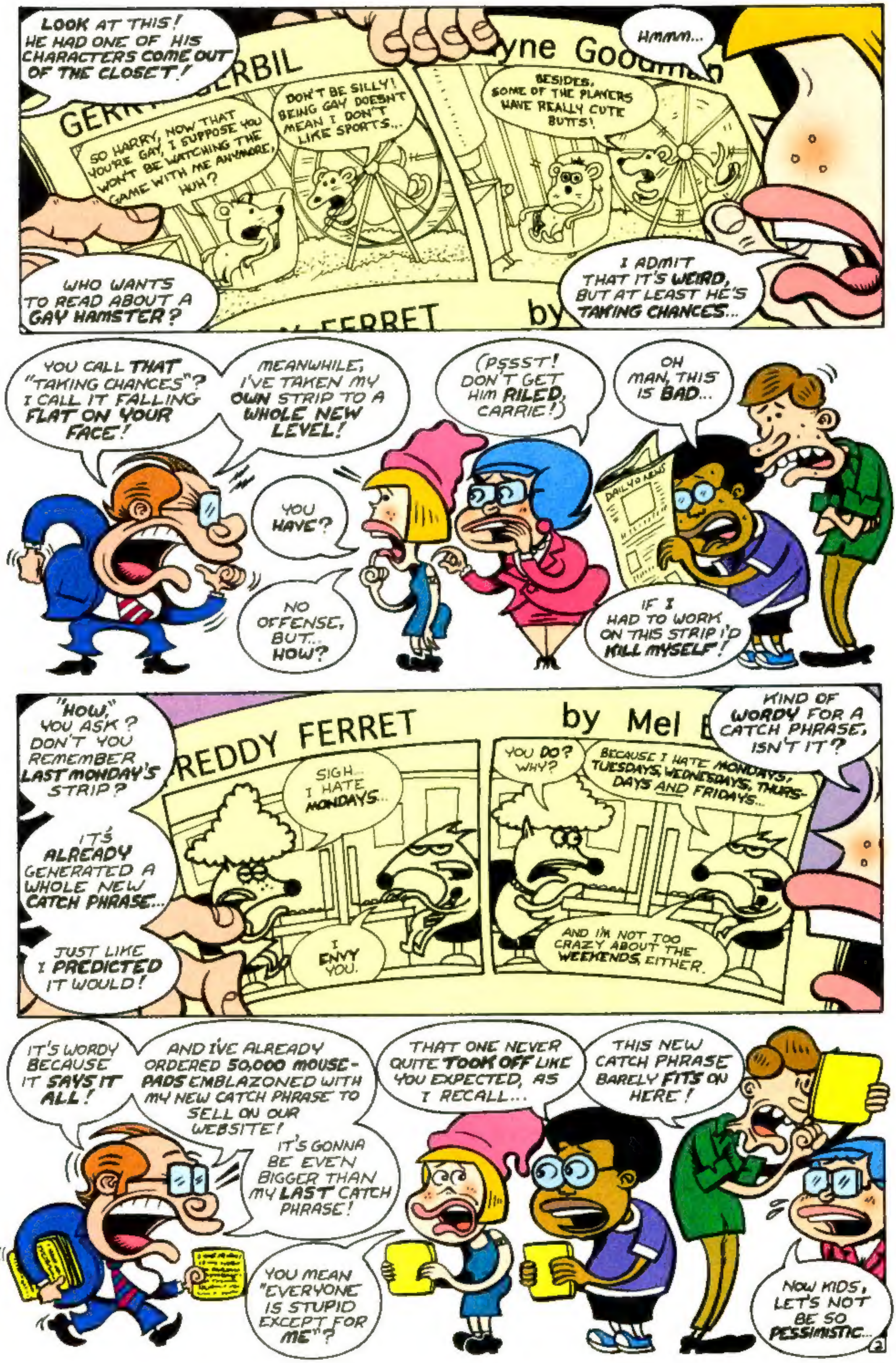
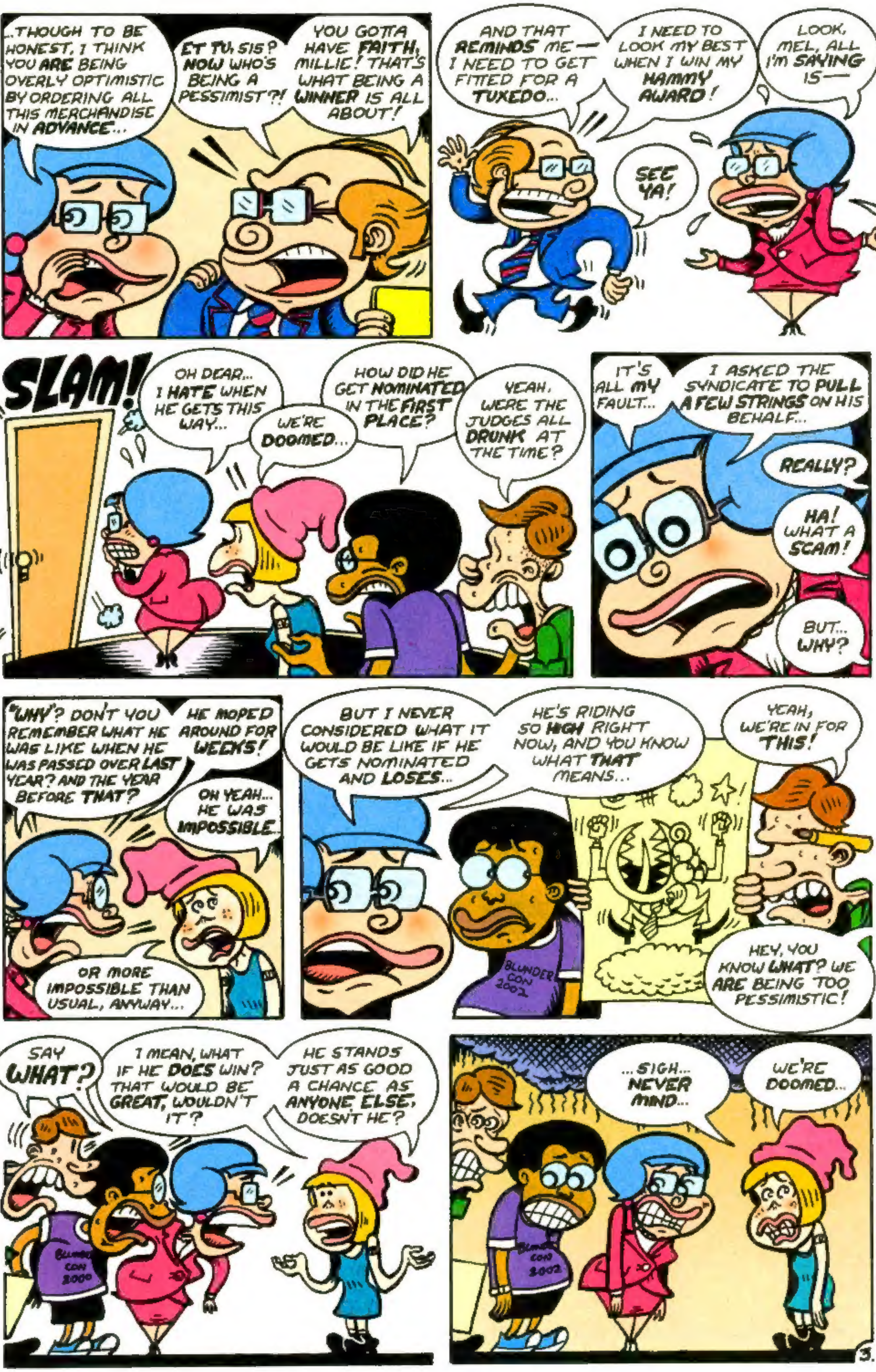
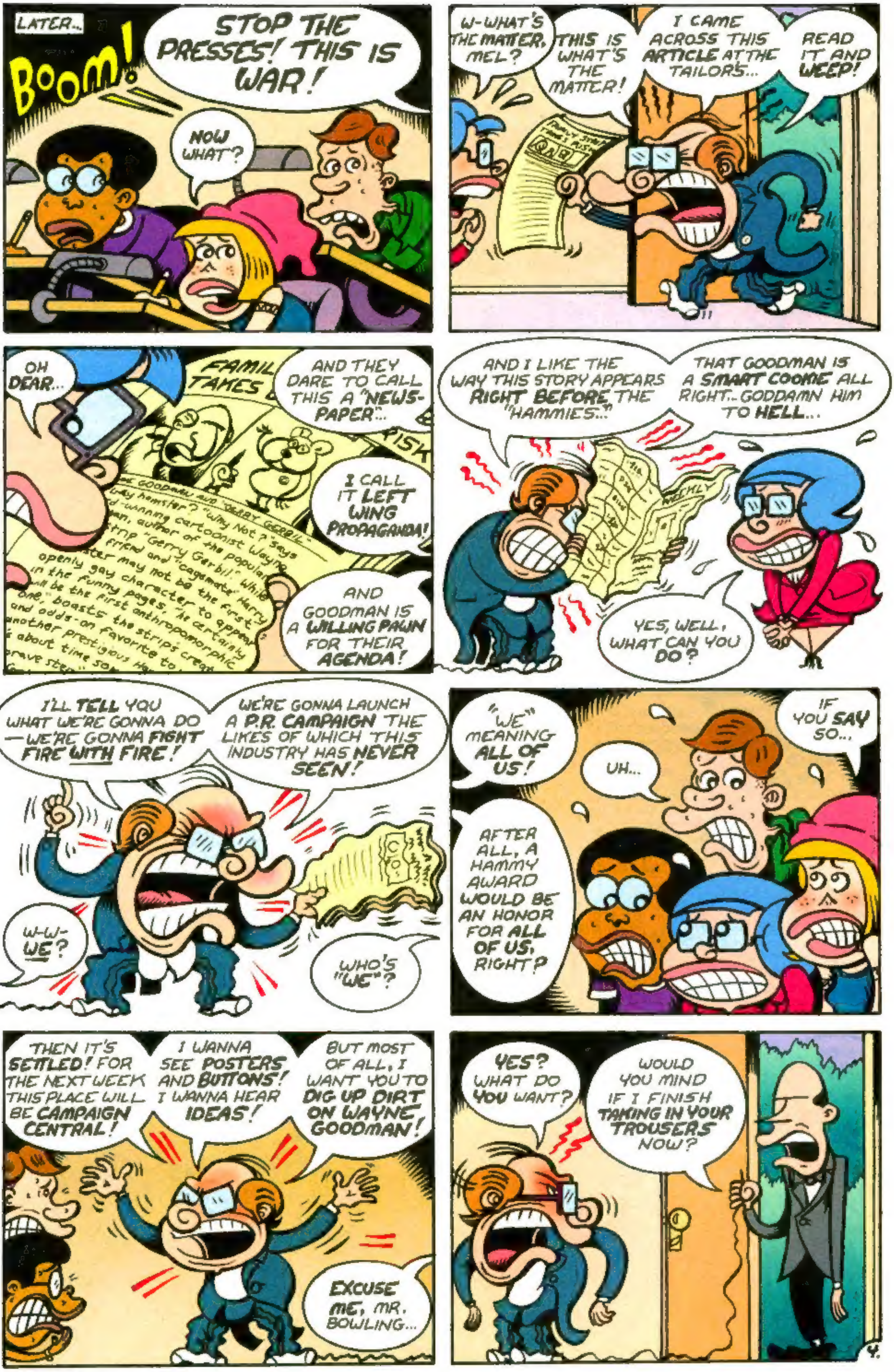
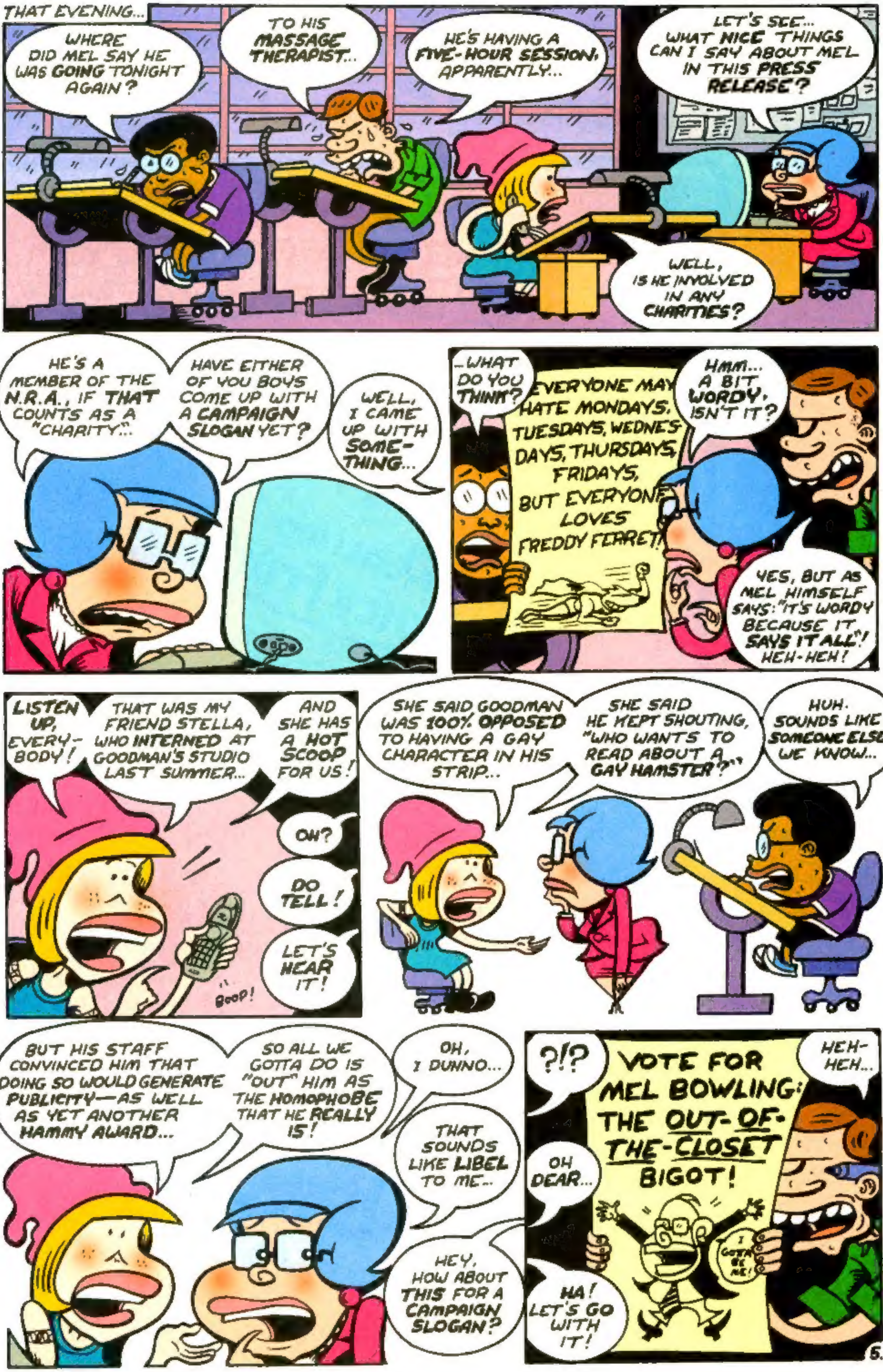

IT'S MEL BOWLING AND HIS HAPPY TROUPE OF UNDERPAID, OVERWORKED ASSISTANTS IN
THE "HAMMIES"
EE-YES!
IT'S ABOUT TIME!
!
WHAT IS IT, MEL?
DID YOU WIN THE LOTTERY?
?
WRITTEN + DRAWN BY: PETER BAGGE
COLORED BY: JOANNE BAGGE
SEPARATED BY: ZYLONOL
EDITOR: JOEY CAVALIERI
SWEATSHOP CREATED BY: PETER BAGGE
BETTER! I'VE JUST BEEN NOMINATED FOR A "HAM FISHER AWARD"!
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS I'M FINALLY GETTING THE RECOGNITION I DESERVE!
REALLY? LET ME SEE!
I HAD A HUNCH THIS WOULD BE MY YEAR...
I COULD FEEL IT IN MY BONES!
DON'T GET TOO EXCITED, MEL. YOU HAVEN'T WON ANYTHING YET...
LET US SEE, TOO...
YEAH, YOU'RE UP AGAINST WAYNE GOODMAN...
THAT GUY WINS EVERY YEAR, DOESN'T HE?
OH, SWELL! RAIN ON MY PARADE, WHY DON'TCHA!
WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON, ANYWAY?
HEY, I'M JUST SAYIN'—
BESIDES, GOODMAN'S TIME IN THE SUN IS OVER...
HAVE YOU READ HIS STRIP LATELY? IT'S GONE STRAIGHT DOWN THE TOILET!
1

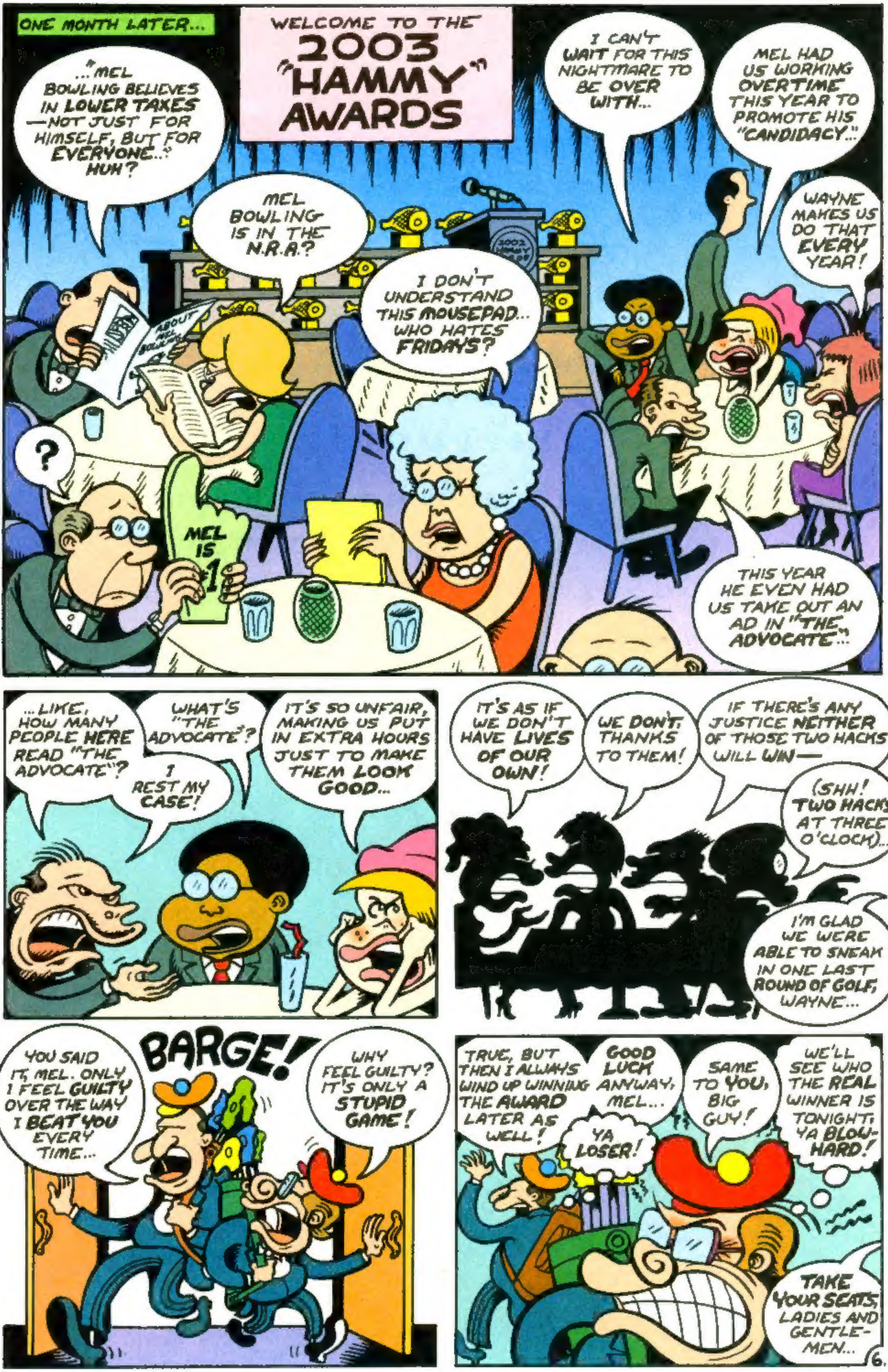

LOOK AT THIS! HE HAD ONE OF HIS CHARACTERS COME OUT OF THE CLOSET!
HMMM...
GERBIL
yne Goodman
SO HARRY, NOW THAT YOU'RE GAY, I SUPPOSE YOU WON'T BE WATCHING THE GAME WITH ME ANYMORE, HUH?
DON'T BE SILLY! BEING GAY DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T LIKE SPORTS...
BESIDES, SOME OF THE PLAYERS HAVE REALLY CUTE BUTTS!
WHO WANTS TO READ ABOUT A GAY HAMSTER?
I ADMIT THAT IT'S WEIRD, BUT AT LEAST HE'S TAKING CHANCES...
YOU CALL THAT "TAKING CHANCES"? I CALL IT FALLING FLAT ON YOUR FACE!
MEANWHILE, I'VE TAKEN MY OWN STRIP TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL!
YOU HAVE?
NO OFFENSE, BUT... HOW?
(PSSST! DON'T GET HIM RILED, CARRIE!)
OH MAN, THIS IS BAD...
IF I HAD TO WORK ON THIS STRIP I'D KILL MYSELF!
"HOW," YOU ASK? DON'T YOU REMEMBER LAST MONDAY'S STRIP?
IT'S ALREADY GENERATED A WHOLE NEW CATCH PHRASE...
JUST LIKE I PREDICTED IT WOULD!
FREDDY FERRET by Mel
SIGH... I HATE MONDAYS...
I ENVY YOU.
YOU DO? WHY?
BECAUSE I HATE MONDAYS, TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, THURSDAYS AND FRIDAYS...
AND I'M NOT TOO CRAZY ABOUT THE WEEKENDS, EITHER.
KIND OF WORDY FOR A CATCH PHRASE, ISN'T IT?
IT'S WORDY BECAUSE IT SAYS IT ALL!
AND I'VE ALREADY ORDERED 50,000 MOUSE-PADS EMBLAZONED WITH MY NEW CATCH PHRASE TO SELL ON OUR WEBSITE!
IT'S GONNA BE EVEN BIGGER THAN MY LAST CATCH PHRASE!
YOU MEAN "EVERYONE IS STUPID EXCEPT FOR ME"?
THAT ONE NEVER QUITE TOOK OFF LIKE YOU EXPECTED, AS I RECALL...
THIS NEW CATCH PHRASE BARELY FITS ON HERE!
NOW KIDS, LET'S NOT BE SO PESSIMISTIC...
2



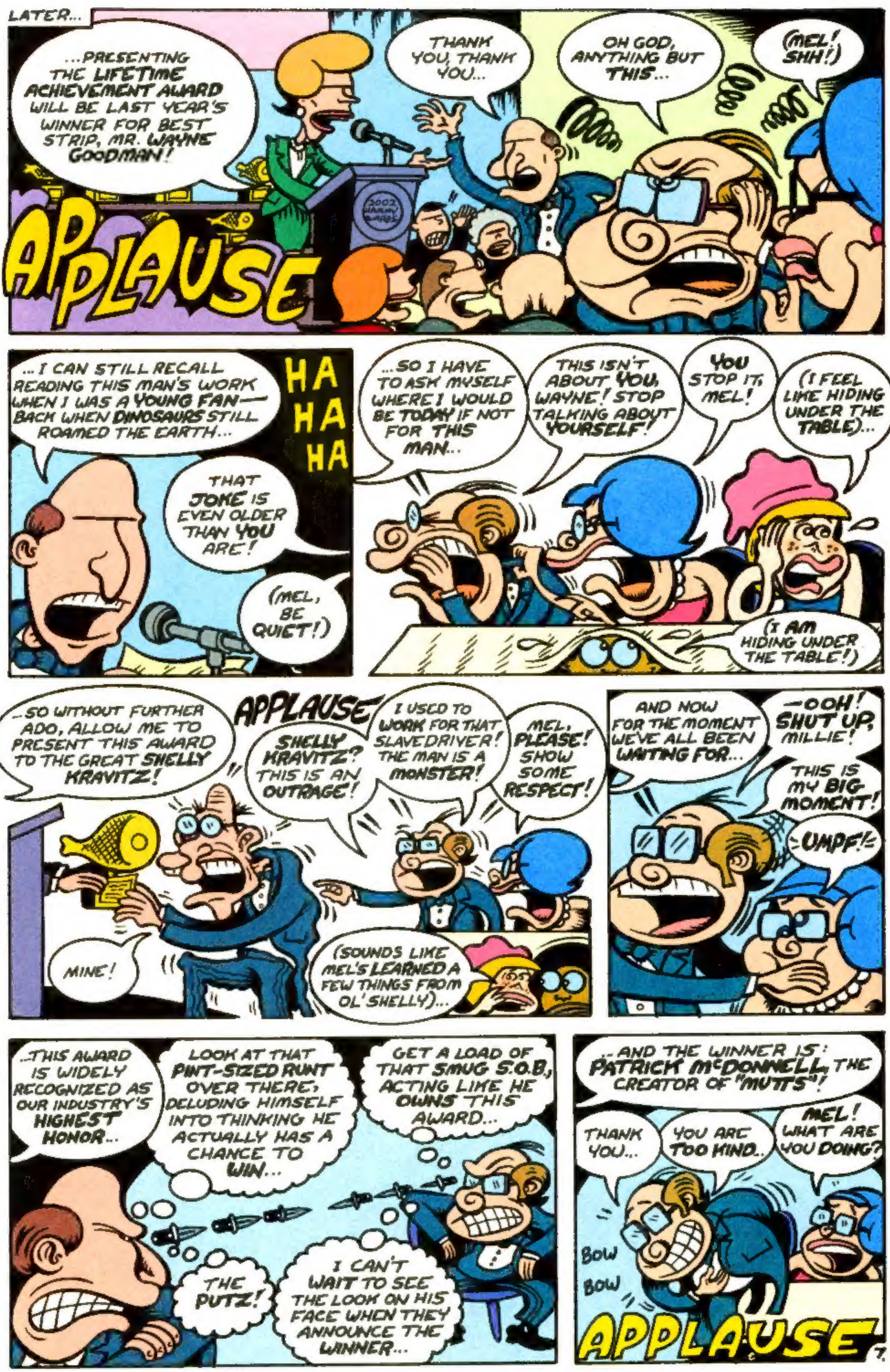
...THOUGH TO BE HONEST, I THINK YOU ARE BEING OVERLY OPTIMISTIC BY ORDERING ALL THIS MERCHANDISE IN ADVANCE...
ET TU, SIS? NOW WHO'S BEING A PESSIMIST?!
YOU GOTTA HAVE FAITH, MILLIE! THAT'S WHAT BEING A WINNER IS ALL ABOUT!
AND THAT REMINDS ME— I NEED TO GET FITTED FOR A TUXEDO...
I NEED TO LOOK MY BEST WHEN I WIN MY HAMMY AWARD!
LOOK, MEL, ALL I'M SAYING IS—
SEE YA!
SLAM!
OH DEAR... I HATE WHEN HE GETS THIS WAY...
WE'RE DOOMED...
HOW DID HE GET NOMINATED IN THE FIRST PLACE?
YEAH, WERE THE JUDGES ALL DRUNK AT THE TIME?
IT'S ALL MY FAULT...
I ASKED THE SYNDICATE TO PULL A FEW STRINGS ON HIS BEHALF...
REALLY?
HA! WHAT A SCAM!
BUT... WHY?
"WHY"? DON'T YOU REMEMBER WHAT HE WAS LIKE WHEN HE WAS PASSED OVER LAST YEAR? AND THE YEAR BEFORE THAT?
HE MOPED AROUND FOR WEEKS!
OH YEAH... HE WAS IMPOSSIBLE...
OR MORE IMPOSSIBLE THAN USUAL, ANYWAY...
BUT I NEVER CONSIDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IF HE GETS NOMINATED AND LOSES...
HE'S RIDING SO HIGH RIGHT NOW, AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS...
YEAH, WE'RE IN FOR THIS!
BLUNDER CON 2002
HEY, YOU KNOW WHAT? WE ARE BEING TOO PESSIMISTIC!
SAY WHAT?
I MEAN, WHAT IF HE DOES WIN? THAT WOULD BE GREAT, WOULDN'T IT?
HE STANDS JUST AS GOOD A CHANCE AS ANYONE ELSE, DOESN'T HE?
...SIGH... NEVER MIND...
WE'RE DOOMED...

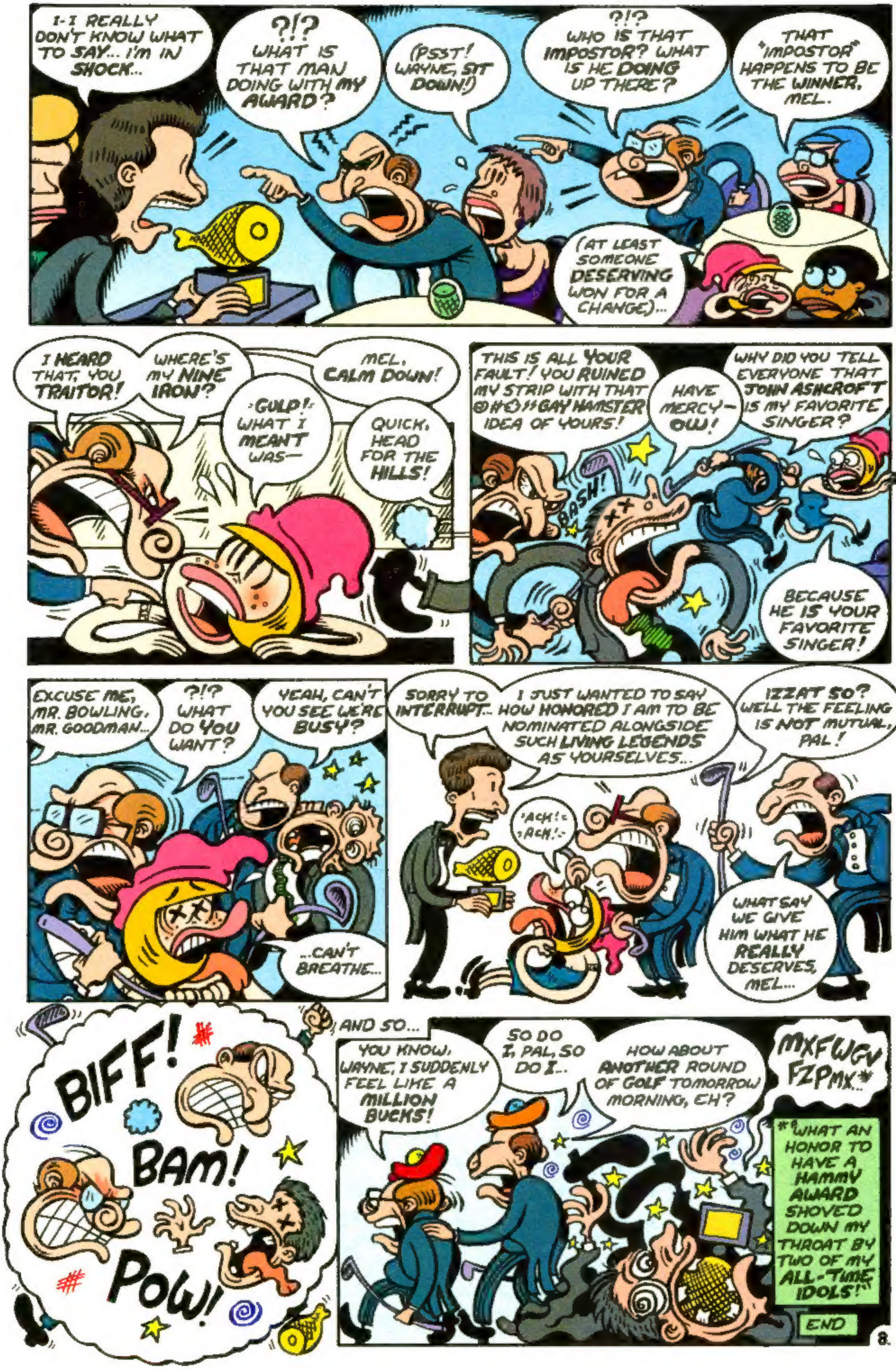

LATER...
BOOM!
STOP THE PRESSES! THIS IS WAR!
NOW WHAT?
W-WHAT'S THE MATTER, MEL?
THIS IS WHAT'S THE MATTER!
I CAME ACROSS THIS ARTICLE AT THE TAILOR'S...
READ IT AND WEEP!
OH DEAR...
AND THEY DARE TO CALL THIS A "NEWSPAPER"...
I CALL IT LEFT WING PROPAGANDA!
AND GOODMAN IS A WILLING PAWN FOR THEIR AGENDA!
AND I LIKE THE WAY THIS STORY APPEARS RIGHT BEFORE THE "HAMMIES"...
THAT GOODMAN IS A SMART COOKIE ALL RIGHT... GODDAMN HIM TO HELL...
YES, WELL, WHAT CAN YOU DO?
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO — WE'RE GONNA FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE!
WE'RE GONNA LAUNCH A P.R. CAMPAIGN THE LIKES OF WHICH THIS INDUSTRY HAS NEVER SEEN!
W-W-WE?
WHO'S "WE"?
"WE" MEANING ALL OF US!
UH...
IF YOU SAY SO...
AFTER ALL, A HAMMY AWARD WOULD BE AN HONOR FOR ALL OF US, RIGHT?
THEN IT'S SETTLED! FOR THE NEXT WEEK THIS PLACE WILL BE CAMPAIGN CENTRAL!
I WANNA SEE POSTERS AND BUTTONS! I WANNA HEAR IDEAS!
BUT MOST OF ALL, I WANT YOU TO DIG UP DIRT ON WAYNE GOODMAN!
EXCUSE ME, MR. BOWLING...
YES? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WOULD YOU MIND IF I FINISH TAKING IN YOUR TROUSERS NOW?


THAT EVENING...
WHERE DID MEL SAY HE WAS GOING TONIGHT AGAIN?
TO HIS MASSAGE THERAPIST...
HE'S HAVING A FIVE-HOUR SESSION, APPARENTLY...
LET'S SEE... WHAT NICE THINGS CAN I SAY ABOUT MEL IN THIS PRESS RELEASE?
WELL, IS HE INVOLVED IN ANY CHARITIES?
HE'S A MEMBER OF THE N.R.A., IF THAT COUNTS AS A "CHARITY"...
HAVE EITHER OF YOU BOYS COME UP WITH A CAMPAIGN SLOGAN YET?
WELL, I CAME UP WITH SOMETHING...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK?
EVERYONE MAY HATE MONDAYS, TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, THURSDAYS, FRIDAYS, BUT EVERYONE LOVES FREDDY FERRET!
HMM... A BIT WORDY, ISN'T IT?
YES, BUT AS MEL HIMSELF SAYS: "IT'S WORDY BECAUSE IT SAYS IT ALL"! HEH-HEH!
LISTEN UP, EVERYBODY!
THAT WAS MY FRIEND STELLA, WHO INTERNED AT GOODMAN'S STUDIO LAST SUMMER...
AND SHE HAS A HOT SCOOP FOR US!
OH?
DO TELL!
LET'S HEAR IT!
BOOP!
SHE SAID GOODMAN WAS 100% OPPOSED TO HAVING A GAY CHARACTER IN HIS STRIP...
SHE SAID HE KEPT SHOUTING, "WHO WANTS TO READ ABOUT A GAY HAMSTER?"
HUH. SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE ELSE WE KNOW...
BUT HIS STAFF CONVINCED HIM THAT DOING SO WOULD GENERATE PUBLICITY—AS WELL AS YET ANOTHER HAMMY AWARD...
SO ALL WE GOTTA DO IS "OUT" HIM AS THE HOMOPHOBE THAT HE REALLY IS!
OH, I DUNNO...
THAT SOUNDS LIKE LIBEL TO ME...
HEY, HOW ABOUT THIS FOR A CAMPAIGN SLOGAN?
?!?
VOTE FOR MEL BOWLING: THE OUT-OF-THE-CLOSET BIGOT!
I GOTTA BE ME!
HEH-HEH...
OH DEAR...
HA! LET'S GO WITH IT!
5.



ONE MONTH LATER...
WELCOME TO THE 2003 "HAMMY" AWARDS
..."MEL BOWLING BELIEVES IN LOWER TAXES —NOT JUST FOR HIMSELF, BUT FOR EVERYONE..." HUH?
MEL BOWLING IS IN THE N.R.A.?
I CAN'T WAIT FOR THIS NIGHTMARE TO BE OVER WITH...
MEL HAD US WORKING OVERTIME THIS YEAR TO PROMOTE HIS "CANDIDACY"...
WAYNE MAKES US DO THAT EVERY YEAR!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS MOUSEPAD... WHO HATES FRIDAYS?
ABOUT MEL BOWLING
?
MEL IS #1
THIS YEAR HE EVEN HAD US TAKE OUT AN AD IN "THE ADVOCATE"...
...LIKE, HOW MANY PEOPLE HERE READ "THE ADVOCATE"?
WHAT'S "THE ADVOCATE"?
I REST MY CASE!
IT'S SO UNFAIR, MAKING US PUT IN EXTRA HOURS JUST TO MAKE THEM LOOK GOOD...
IT'S AS IF WE DON'T HAVE LIVES OF OUR OWN!
WE DON'T, THANKS TO THEM!
IF THERE'S ANY JUSTICE NEITHER OF THOSE TWO HACKS WILL WIN—
(SHH! TWO HACKS AT THREE O'CLOCK)...
I'M GLAD WE WERE ABLE TO SNEAK IN ONE LAST ROUND OF GOLF, WAYNE...
YOU SAID IT, MEL. ONLY I FEEL GUILTY OVER THE WAY I BEAT YOU EVERY TIME...
BARGE!
WHY FEEL GUILTY? IT'S ONLY A STUPID GAME!
TRUE, BUT THEN I ALWAYS WIND UP WINNING THE AWARD LATER AS WELL!
GOOD LUCK ANYWAY, MEL...
YA LOSER!
SAME TO YOU, BIG GUY!
WE'LL SEE WHO THE REAL WINNER IS TONIGHT, YA BLOW-HARD!
TAKE YOUR SEATS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...
6.


LATER...
...PRESENTING THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WILL BE LAST YEAR'S WINNER FOR BEST STRIP, MR. WAYNE GOODMAN!
THANK YOU, THANK YOU...
OH GOD, ANYTHING BUT THIS...
(MEL! SHH!)
2002 HARRY AWARDS
APPLAUSE
...I CAN STILL RECALL READING THIS MAN'S WORK WHEN I WAS A YOUNG FAN— BACK WHEN DINOSAURS STILL ROAMED THE EARTH...
HA HA HA
THAT JOKE IS EVEN OLDER THAN YOU ARE!
(MEL, BE QUIET!)
...SO I HAVE TO ASK MYSELF WHERE I WOULD BE TODAY IF NOT FOR THIS MAN...
THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU, WAYNE! STOP TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF!
YOU STOP IT, MEL!
(I FEEL LIKE HIDING UNDER THE TABLE)...
(I AM HIDING UNDER THE TABLE!)
...SO WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, ALLOW ME TO PRESENT THIS AWARD TO THE GREAT SHELLY KRAVITZ!
APPLAUSE
SHELLY KRAVITZ? THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
I USED TO WORK FOR THAT SLAVEDRIVER! THE MAN IS A MONSTER!
MEL, PLEASE! SHOW SOME RESPECT!
MINE!
(SOUNDS LIKE MEL'S LEARNED A FEW THINGS FROM OL' SHELLY)...
AND NOW FOR THE MOMENT WE'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR...
—OOH! SHUT UP, MILLIE!
THIS IS MY BIG MOMENT!
UMPF!
...THIS AWARD IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AS OUR INDUSTRY'S HIGHEST HONOR...
LOOK AT THAT PINT-SIZED RUNT OVER THERE, DELUDING HIMSELF INTO THINKING HE ACTUALLY HAS A CHANCE TO WIN...
GET A LOAD OF THAT SMUG S.O.B., ACTING LIKE HE OWNS THIS AWARD...
THE PUTZ!
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE WHEN THEY ANNOUNCE THE WINNER...
...AND THE WINNER IS: PATRICK McDONNELL, THE CREATOR OF "MUTTS"!
THANK YOU...
YOU ARE TOO KIND...
MEL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
BOW
BOW
APPLAUSE
7


I-I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY... I'M IN SHOCK...
?!? WHAT IS THAT MAN DOING WITH MY AWARD?
(PSST! WAYNE, SIT DOWN!)
?!? WHO IS THAT IMPOSTOR? WHAT IS HE DOING UP THERE?
THAT "IMPOSTOR" HAPPENS TO BE THE WINNER, MEL.
(AT LEAST SOMEONE DESERVING WON FOR A CHANGE)...
I HEARD THAT, YOU TRAITOR!
WHERE'S MY NINE IRON?
MEL, CALM DOWN!
-GULP!- WHAT I MEANT WAS—
QUICK, HEAD FOR THE HILLS!
THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT! YOU RUINED MY STRIP WITH THAT @#@!! GAY HAMSTER IDEA OF YOURS!
HAVE MERCY— OW!
WHY DID YOU TELL EVERYONE THAT JOHN ASHCROFT IS MY FAVORITE SINGER?
BASH!
BECAUSE HE IS YOUR FAVORITE SINGER!
EXCUSE ME, MR. BOWLING, MR. GOODMAN...
?!? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YEAH, CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE BUSY?
...CAN'T BREATHE...
SORRY TO INTERRUPT...
I JUST WANTED TO SAY HOW HONORED I AM TO BE NOMINATED ALONGSIDE SUCH LIVING LEGENDS AS YOURSELVES...
IZZAT SO? WELL THE FEELING IS NOT MUTUAL, PAL!
-ACK!- -ACK!-
WHAT SAY WE GIVE HIM WHAT HE REALLY DESERVES, MEL...
BIFF!
BAM!
POW!
AND SO...
YOU KNOW, WAYNE, I SUDDENLY FEEL LIKE A MILLION BUCKS!
SO DO I, PAL, SO DO I...
HOW ABOUT ANOTHER ROUND OF GOLF TOMORROW MORNING, EH?
MXFWGV FZPMX*...
*"WHAT AN HONOR TO HAVE A HAMMY AWARD SHOVED DOWN MY THROAT BY TWO OF MY ALL-TIME IDOLS!"
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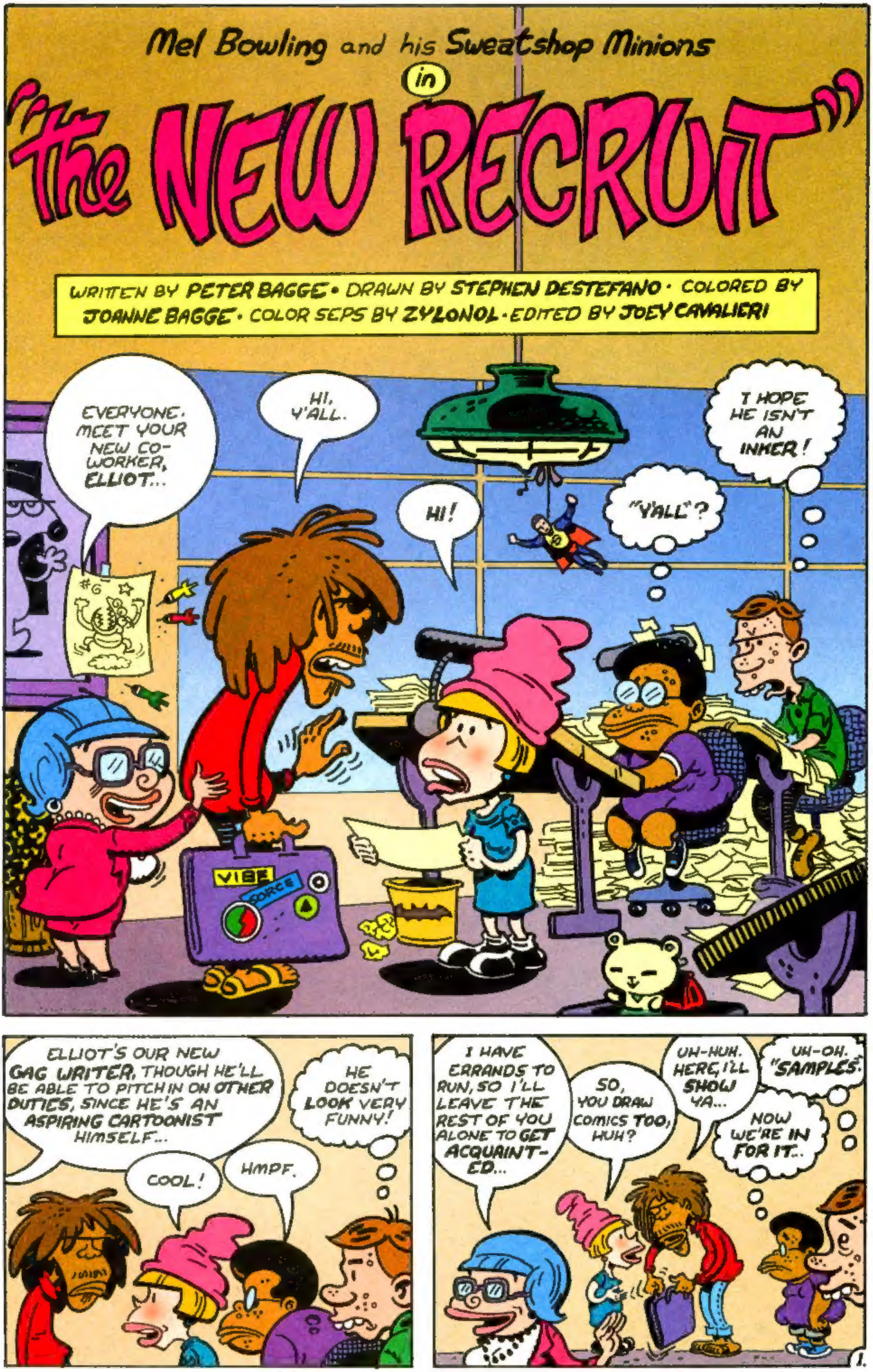
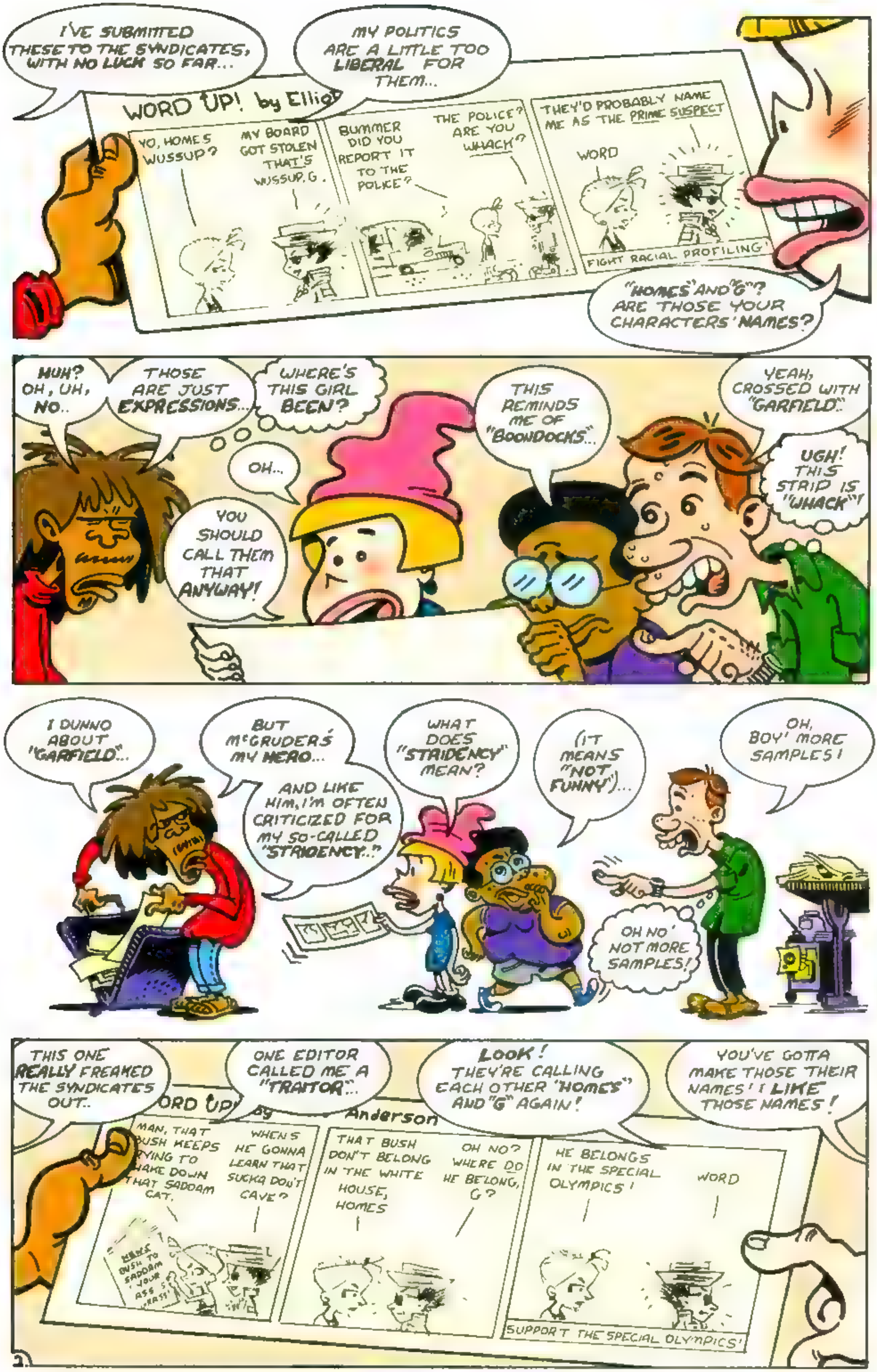
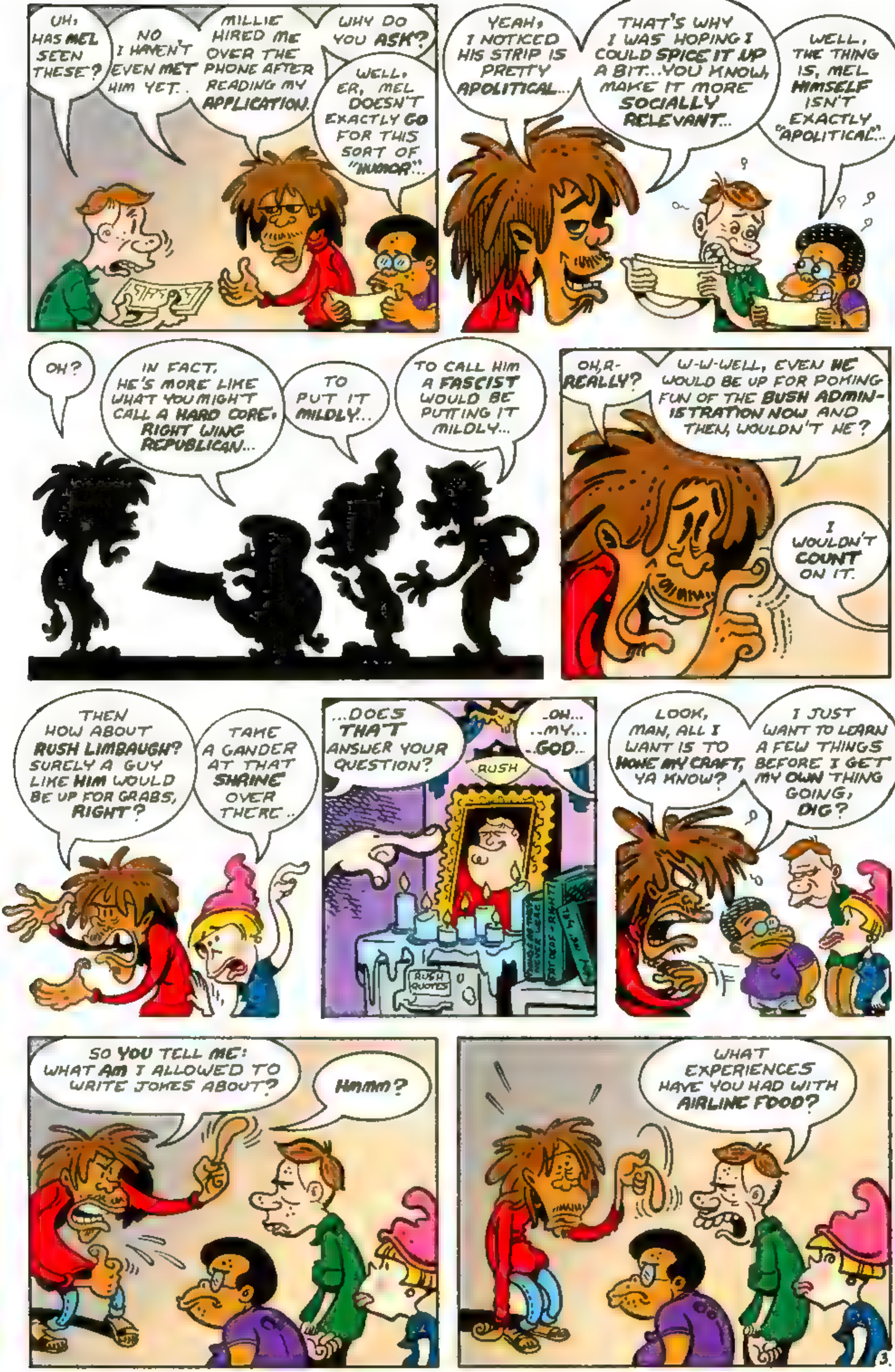
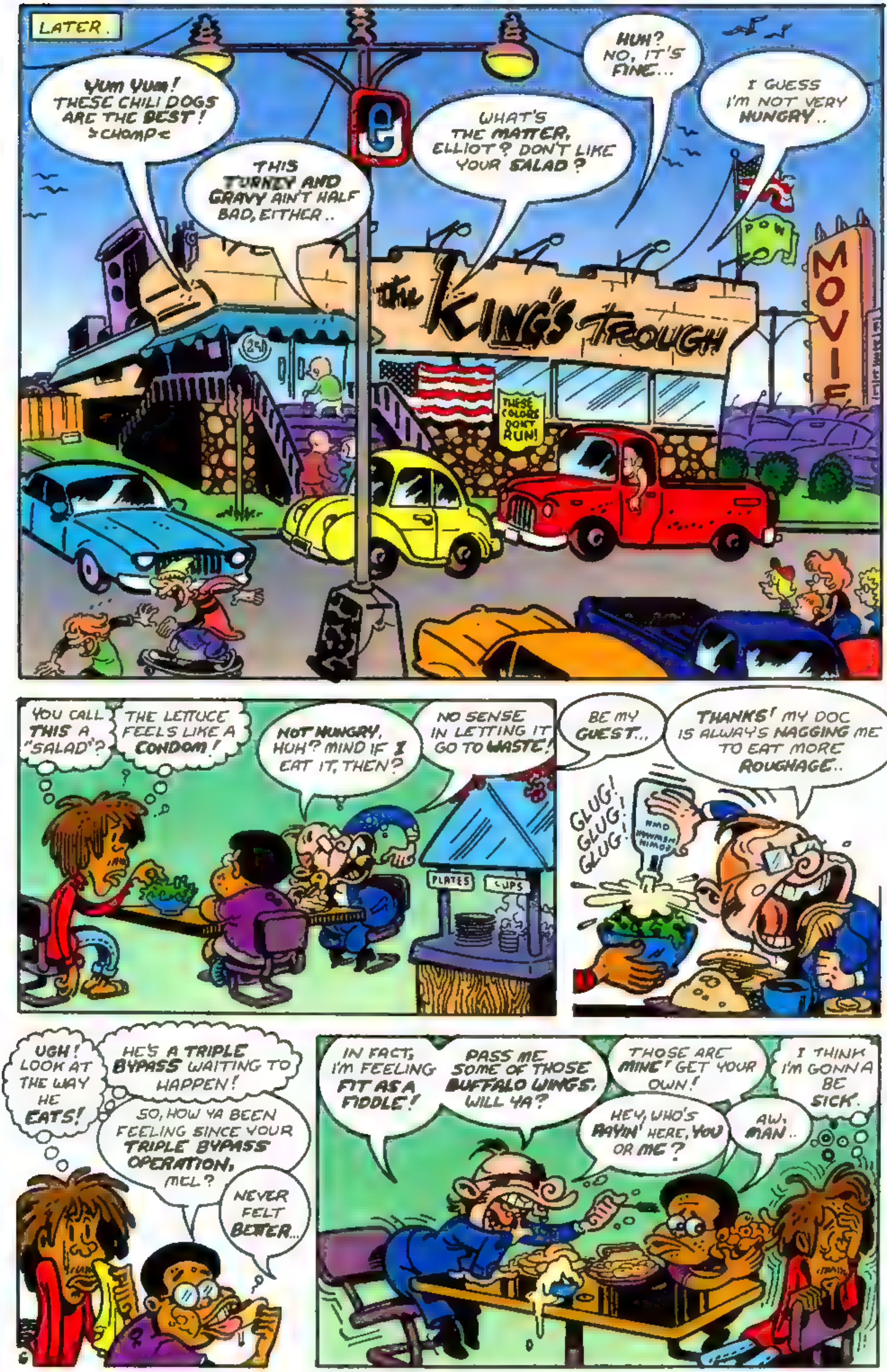

Mel Bowling and his Sweatshop Minions
in
"The NEW RECRUIT"
WRITTEN BY PETER BAGGE • DRAWN BY STEPHEN DESTEFANO • COLORED BY JOANNE BAGGE • COLOR SEPS BY ZYLONOL • EDITED BY JOEY CAVALIERI
EVERYONE, MEET YOUR NEW CO-WORKER, ELLIOT...
HI, Y'ALL.
HI!
"Y'ALL"?
I HOPE HE ISN'T AN INKER!
VIBE
FORCE
ELLIOT'S OUR NEW GAG WRITER, THOUGH HE'LL BE ABLE TO PITCH IN ON OTHER DUTIES, SINCE HE'S AN ASPIRING CARTOONIST HIMSELF...
HE DOESN'T LOOK VERY FUNNY!
COOL!
HMPF.
I HAVE ERRANDS TO RUN, SO I'LL LEAVE THE REST OF YOU ALONE TO GET ACQUAINT-ED...
SO, YOU DRAW COMICS TOO, HUH?
UH-HUH. HERE, I'LL SHOW YA...
UH-OH. "SAMPLES."
NOW WE'RE IN FOR IT..
1.


I'VE SUBMITTED THESE TO THE SYNDICATES, WITH NO LUCK SO FAR...
MY POLITICS ARE A LITTLE TOO LIBERAL FOR THEM...
WORD UP! by Elliot
YO, HOMES WUSSUP?
MY BOARD GOT STOLEN THAT'S WUSSUP, G.
BUMMER DID YOU REPORT IT TO THE POLICE?
THE POLICE? ARE YOU WHACK?
THEY'D PROBABLY NAME ME AS THE PRIME SUSPECT
WORD
FIGHT RACIAL PROFILING!
"HOMES" AND "G"? ARE THOSE YOUR CHARACTERS' NAMES?
HUH? OH, UH, NO..
THOSE ARE JUST EXPRESSIONS...
WHERE'S THIS GIRL BEEN?
OH...
YOU SHOULD CALL THEM THAT ANYWAY!
THIS REMINDS ME OF "BOONDOCKS"...
YEAH, CROSSED WITH "GARFIELD".
UGH! THIS STRIP IS "WHACK"!
I DUNNO ABOUT "GARFIELD"...
BUT McGRUDER'S MY HERO...
AND LIKE HIM, I'M OFTEN CRITICIZED FOR MY SO-CALLED "STRIDENCY.."
WHAT DOES "STRIDENCY" MEAN?
(IT MEANS "NOT FUNNY")...
OH, BOY! MORE SAMPLES!
OH NO! NOT MORE SAMPLES!
THIS ONE REALLY FREAKED THE SYNDICATES OUT..
ONE EDITOR CALLED ME A "TRAITOR"...
LOOK! THEY'RE CALLING EACH OTHER "HOMES" AND "G" AGAIN!
YOU'VE GOTTA MAKE THOSE THEIR NAMES! I LIKE THOSE NAMES!
WORD UP! by Anderson
MAN, THAT BUSH KEEPS TRYING TO TAKE DOWN THAT SADDAM CAT.
WHEN'S HE GONNA LEARN THAT SUCKA DON'T CAVE?
THAT BUSH DON'T BELONG IN THE WHITE HOUSE, HOMES
OH NO? WHERE DO HE BELONG, G?
HE BELONGS IN THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS!
WORD
SUPPORT THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS!


UH, HAS MEL SEEN THESE?
NO I HAVEN'T EVEN MET HIM YET...
MILLIE HIRED ME OVER THE PHONE AFTER READING MY APPLICATION.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
WELL, ER, MEL DOESN'T EXACTLY GO FOR THIS SORT OF "HUMOR"...
YEAH, I NOTICED HIS STRIP IS PRETTY APOLITICAL...
THAT'S WHY I WAS HOPING I COULD SPICE IT UP A BIT...YOU KNOW, MAKE IT MORE SOCIALLY RELEVANT...
WELL, THE THING IS, MEL HIMSELF ISN'T EXACTLY "APOLITICAL"...
OH?
IN FACT, HE'S MORE LIKE WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL A HARD CORE, RIGHT WING REPUBLICAN...
TO PUT IT MILDLY...
TO CALL HIM A FASCIST WOULD BE PUTTING IT MILDLY...
OH, R-REALLY?
W-W-WELL, EVEN HE WOULD BE UP FOR POKING FUN OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION NOW AND THEN, WOULDN'T HE?
I WOULDN'T COUNT ON IT.
THEN HOW ABOUT RUSH LIMBAUGH? SURELY A GUY LIKE HIM WOULD BE UP FOR GRABS, RIGHT?
TAKE A GANDER AT THAT SHRINE OVER THERE...
...DOES THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION?
..OH... ..MY... ..GOD...
RUSH
RUSH QUOTES
LOOK, MAN, ALL I WANT IS TO HONE MY CRAFT, YA KNOW?
I JUST WANT TO LEARN A FEW THINGS BEFORE I GET MY OWN THING GOING, DIG?
SO YOU TELL ME: WHAT AM I ALLOWED TO WRITE JOKES ABOUT?
HMMM?
WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU HAD WITH AIRLINE FOOD?

SO, WHAT DO YOU DO AROUND HERE?
WHO, ME? I, UH, INK, MAINLY...
I'D LOVE TO PENCIL MORE, BUT THAT'S ALFRED'S DOMAIN.
ALFRED'S MEL'S FAVORITE.
AM NOT! TAKE THAT BACK!
AND WHAT DO YOU DO?
LETTERING, MOSTLY. AND COLORING...
—OH, AND I DO THE PANEL BORDERS!
PANEL BORDERS? ISN'T THAT, LIKE, AN ENTRY-LEVEL TASK?
HOW LONG YOU BEEN HERE, ANYWAY?
THREE YEARS...
BUT, I LIKE DOING THEM! IT'S MY FAVORITE PART OF THE JOB!
(PLUS IT'S ALL SHE CAN DO)...
I HEARD THAT!
ALFRED THINKS GIRLS CAN'T DRAW...
I NEVER SAID THAT!
(JUST SOME GIRLS CAN'T)...
I HEARD THAT, TOO!
SO WHAT DOES MEL HIMSELF DO AROUND HERE?
TEE-HEE!
=SNICKER=
GOOD QUESTION!
WELL?
WELL, BESIDES DOING LUNCH, HE'S THE SUPPOSED "BIG IDEA" MAN...
WHICH MAINLY ENTAILS COMING UP WITH "CATCH PHRASES" FOR COFFEE MUGS...
OTHER THAN THAT, HE AIN'T GOOD FOR MUCH...
HE RELIES PRETTY HEAVILY ON GAG WRITERS...
NONE OF WHOM SEEM TO LAST TOO LONG...
R-REALLY?
IN THE MEANTIME, HE RELIES ON US TO COME UP WITH GAGS, WHICH WE ALL HATE TO DO!
SO WE'RE ALL ROOTIN' FOR YA, PAL! HYUK!
OH, MAN...
SO WHERE IS THE GREAT MEL BOWLING, ANYWAY?
HE USUALLY HIDES IN HIS OFFICE UNTIL IT'S—
LUNCH TIME, EVERYONE!

I'M OFF TO "THE KING'S TROUGH." ANYONE CARE TO JOIN ME?
OH BOY! MY FAVORITE PLACE!
UGH.
I'LL PASS.
WHAT'S "THE KING'S TROUGH"?
IT'S AN "ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT" JOINT.
(AND TRUST ME, YOU DO NOT WANT TO GO THERE).
SAY, YOU MUST BE THE NEW GUY!
YES, I'M ELLIOT...
WELCOME ABOARD, ELLIOT!
SO, FEELING HUNGRY?
ER, NOT REALLY...
OH, C'MON! IT'LL GIVE US A CHANCE TO BREAK THE ICE!
BESIDES, IT'LL BE MY TREAT!
ALL RIGHT!
THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU, BUT I'M A VEGAN, AND—
A "VEE-GIN"? IS THAT CONTAGIOUS?
IT MEANS HE'S A STRICT VEGETARIAN, MEL...
OH? WELL, SO WHAT? NOBODY'S PERFECT! HA HA!
JOIN US ANYWAY! I'M SURE THEY'LL HAVE SOMETHING YOU CAN EAT!
I GUESS I COULD ORDER A SALAD...
UGH! THEIR SALAD BAR IS FRIGHTENING...
SO IT'S SETTLED, THEN! LET'S GO!
I JUST HOPE THEY'LL SERVE YOU WITH THAT UNCOMBED HAIR OF YOURS..
?!? THESE ARE DREADLOCKS!
HIS HAIR IS SUPPOSED TO LOOK THAT WAY, MEL.
YEAH, SURE, TELL ME ANOTHER ONE.
WE COULD ALWAYS BUY YOU A BRUSH ALONG THE WAY..
OR A LARGE HAT.
TOO BAD YOU'RE A VEGAN, ELLIOT, 'CUZ THEIR CHILI DOGS ARE OUT OF THIS WORLD!
WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?
(I'LL BE AMAZED IF THIS GUY LASTS A WEEK.)
(I'LL BE AMAZED IF HE RETURNS FROM LUNCH!)

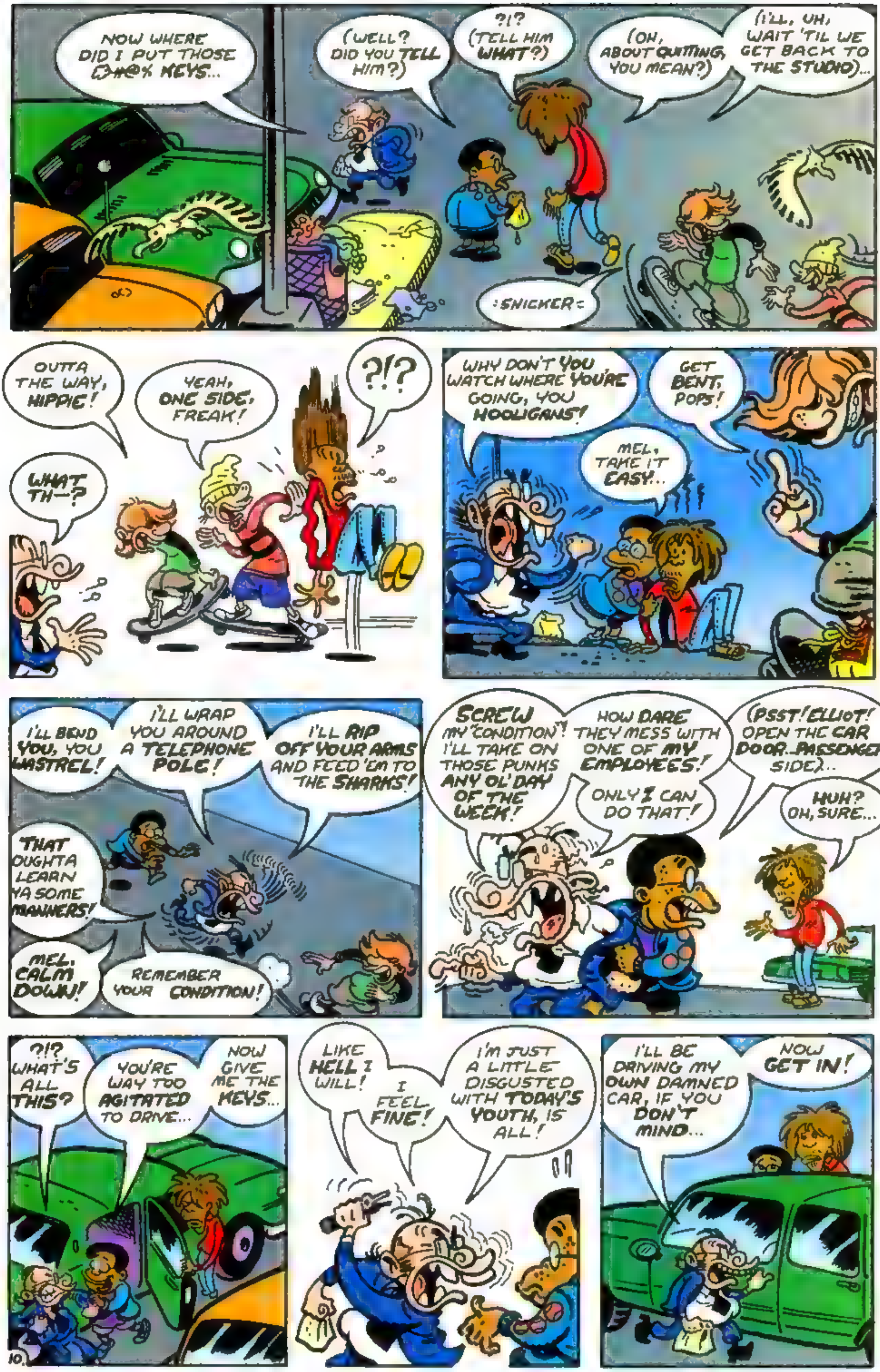


LATER.
YUM YUM! THESE CHILI DOGS ARE THE BEST! >CHOMP<
THIS TURKEY AND GRAVY AIN'T HALF BAD, EITHER..
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ELLIOT? DON'T LIKE YOUR SALAD?
HUH? NO, IT'S FINE...
I GUESS I'M NOT VERY HUNGRY..
THE KING'S TROUGH
THESE COLORS DON'T RUN!
MOVIE
YOU CALL THIS A "SALAD"?
THE LETTUCE FEELS LIKE A CONDOM!
NOT HUNGRY, HUH? MIND IF I EAT IT, THEN?
NO SENSE IN LETTING IT GO TO WASTE!
PLATES
CUPS
BE MY GUEST...
THANKS! MY DOC IS ALWAYS NAGGING ME TO EAT MORE ROUGHAGE..
GLUG! GLUG! GLUG!
UGH! LOOK AT THE WAY HE EATS!
HE'S A TRIPLE BYPASS WAITING TO HAPPEN!
SO, HOW YA BEEN FEELING SINCE YOUR TRIPLE BYPASS OPERATION, MEL?
NEVER FELT BETTER...
IN FACT, I'M FEELING FIT AS A FIDDLE!
PASS ME SOME OF THOSE BUFFALO WINGS, WILL YA?
THOSE ARE MINE! GET YOUR OWN!
HEY, WHO'S PAYIN' HERE, YOU OR ME?
AW, MAN..
I THINK I'M GONNA BE SICK.

SO TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF, ELLIOT. DID YOU GO TO COLLEGE?
I STILL AM...
I'M TAKING A BREAK FROM SARAH LAURENCE...
DOES HE ALWAYS TALK WITH HIS MOUTH FULL?
SLURP!
SLORP!
SARAH LAWRENCE? I THOUGHT THAT WAS A GIRLS' SCHOOL!
IT WAS...
IT'S BEEN CO-ED FOR ABOUT.. OH... THREE DECADES NOW...
I USED TO KNOW A GUY WHO TAUGHT THERE. HE WAS A CARD-CARRYING PINKO...
I HOPE THEY FIRED HIM BEFORE HE COULD BRAIN-WASH YOU...
WHERE YA FROM, ANYWAY?
HUH? OH, I'M FROM MANHATTAN.
A "PINKO"? THIS GUY'S A PIECE OF WORK!
OH YEAH? WHERE IN MANHATTAN? HARLEM?
MORE LIKE THE UPPER WEST SIDE...
SLURP!
THE UPPER WEST SIDE? THAT'S A HIGH-RENT DISTRICT!
YOU SURE YOU AIN'T FROM HARLEM?
YES, I'M SURE!
WHY WOULD I LIE?
HEY, GROWING UP IN HARLEM AIN'T NOTHIN' TO BE ASHAMED OF...
AND ALFRED HERE IS FROM HARLEM, TOO!
I'M FROM YONKERS, FER GOSH-SAKES!
ACTUALLY, I'M FROM QUEENS...
MEL BOWLING! I THOUGHT YOU WERE BANNED FROM THIS HIGH-CLASS ESTABLISHMENT!
HA HA!
YOU WISH, EARL! HA-HA!
IN FACT, I'M EXPOSING MY YOUNG PROTÉGÉS HERE TO THIS FINE CUISINE!
"PROTÉGÉS," EH?
SO TELL ME, MEL, WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE IN THE MINORITY FOR A CHANGE, HMMM? HA HA!
I KNOW, RIGHT? I FEEL LIKE I'M IN DEEPEST, DARKEST AFRICA OVAH HEAH! HA HA!
HA HA!
"HA HA."

I'M GETTIN' SOME MORE OF THOSE BUFFALO WINGS...
SAVE MY SEAT!
>CHOMP<
THAT DOES IT. I QUIT.
?!? YOU ARE? WHY?
WHY? HAS IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU THAT MEL MIGHT BE A RACIST?
ER, I PREFER TO THINK OF HIM AS "OLD-FASHIONED".
AND AT LEAST HE'S OPEN AND HONEST ABOUT IT...
PFFT. THAT'S LIKE PRAISING SOMEONE FOR BEING AN HONEST CHILD MO-LESTER.
LOOK, I'M NOT TRYING TO MAKE EXCUSES...
..BUT ALL THINGS CONSIDERED MEL AIN'T SUCH A BAD GUY...
OH? WHAT HAS HE EVER DONE FOR YOU? BESIDES TREAT YOU TO "THE KING'S TROUGH," THAT IS.
WELL, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF MY DREAM OF DRAWING SUPERHEROES.
WHY AREN'T YOU DRAWING THEM NOW, THEN?
I MAKE MORE MONEY WORKING FOR MEL, FOR ONE THING...
AND I ALSO WANT TO PUBLISH MY OWN CHARACTERS, WHICH IS A LOT EASIER SAID THAN DONE...
ARE YOU TWO PLANNING A COUP AL-READY?
ALFRED WAS TELLING ME ABOUT HIS LIFELONG DREAM...
OH? IS IT THE ONE INVOLVING JENNIFER LOPEZ? HA-HA!
NO, IT'S THE ONE INVOLVING HIS WANTING TO DRAW SUPERHEROES...
SUPER-HEROES ?!?
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT THE DAILIES ARE WHERE THE REAL MONEY IS?!
COMIC BOOKS ARE FOR LOSERS!
OH? WHAT ABOUT STAN LEE? OR TODD McFARLANE?
WHO?
>CHOMP<

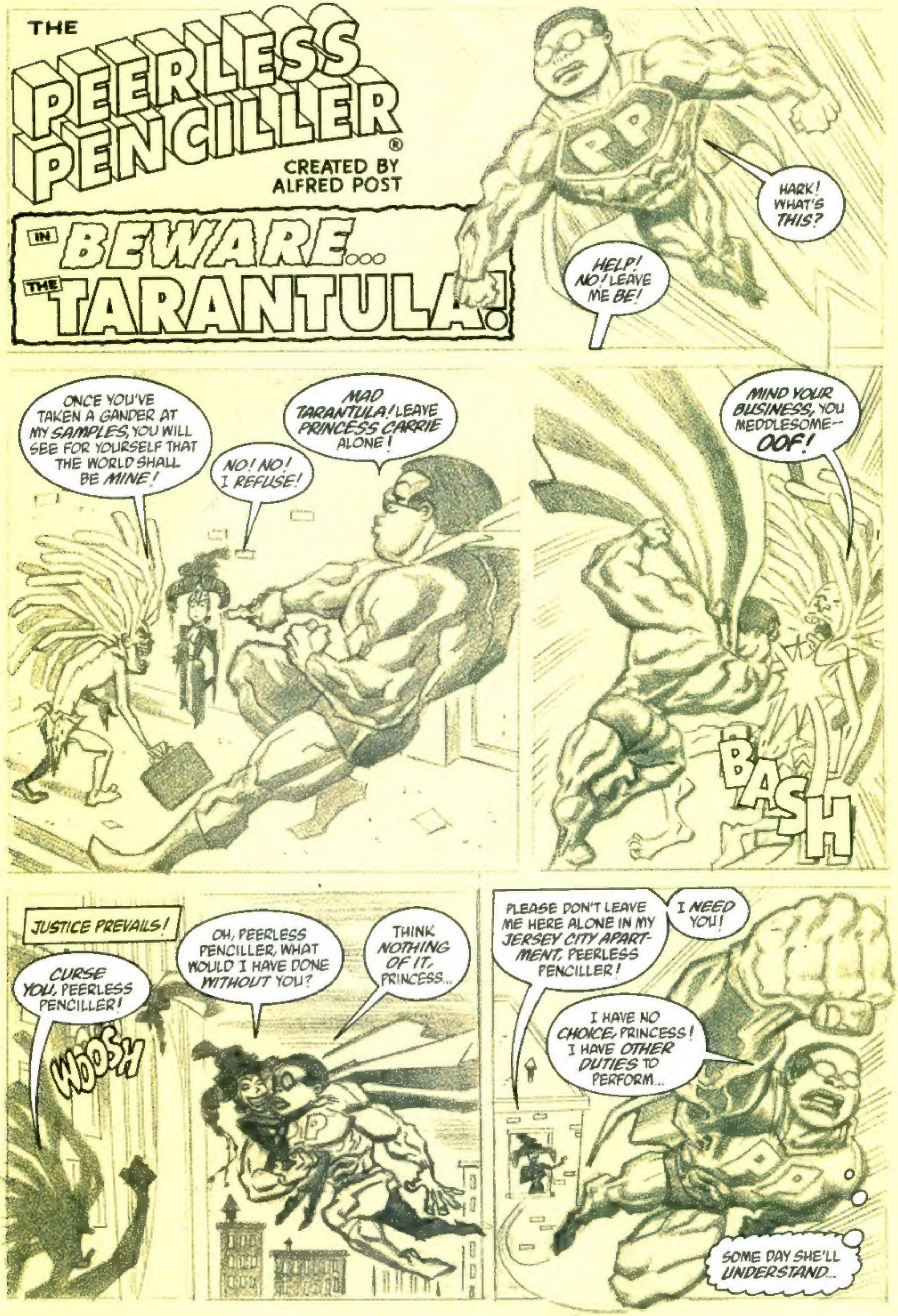
YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF STAN LEE? HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
IT'S LIKE YOUR MIND IS STUCK IN 1963 OR SOMETHING...
I WISH IT STILL WAS 1963! OUR COUNTRY'S BEEN GOING DOWN THE TOILET EVER SINCE!
...HEY, YOU EATIN' THOSE ONION RINGS?
YES! HANDS OFF!
1963 WAS WHEN OUR COUNTRY FINALLY STEPPED OUT OF THE DARK AGES...
SO SUE ME FOR MISSING THE DARK AGES... =CHOMP!=
—ARE YOU GONNA EAT THOSE ONION RINGS OR NOT?
YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY THE WAY YOU'RE HOARDING THOSE THINGS!
I'M SAVING THEM!
SAVING THEM FOR WHAT?
TO SNACK ON BACK AT THE STUDIO...
OH, NO! YOU'RE NOT BRINGING THOSE BACK!
WHY NOT? WE AWAYS "DOGGIE BAG" IT WHENEVER WE COME HERE...
!
?
BECAUSE ONION RINGS DON'T KEEP! THEY GET ALL SOGGY AND GROSS!
THAT'S WORSE! THEY FALL APART IN THE MICROWAVE! EAT 'EM NOW OR HAND 'EM OVER!
I'LL NUKE 'EM—
I'M TAKING THEM!
FINE! BE THAT WAY! BUT WE'RE GETTING SEPARATE DOGGIE BAGS THIS TIME...
I DON'T WANT YOUR SLOP TOUCHING MY BUFFALO WINGS!
OH, HEAVEN FORBID...
DON'T BE A WISE GUY!
I MUST BE HALLUCINATING.
AND SO...
AHH... THAT HIT THE SPOT...
I FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA BURST...
THESE TWO ARE UNBELIEVABLE...
PLEASE WAIT TO BE SEATED
SKINNY DOGS
...THEIR RELATIONSHIP IS BASED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON OVEREATING!
9.


NOW WHERE DID I PUT THOSE @#@% KEYS...
(WELL? DID YOU TELL HIM?)
?!? (TELL HIM WHAT?)
(OH, ABOUT QUITTING, YOU MEAN?)
(I'LL, UH, WAIT 'TIL WE GET BACK TO THE STUDIO)...
:SNICKER:
OUTTA THE WAY, HIPPIE!
YEAH, ONE SIDE, FREAK!
?!?
WHAT TH—?
WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, YOU HOOLIGANS!
GET BENT, POPS!
MEL, TAKE IT EASY...
I'LL BEND YOU, YOU WASTREL!
I'LL WRAP YOU AROUND A TELEPHONE POLE!
I'LL RIP OFF YOUR ARMS AND FEED 'EM TO THE SHARKS!
THAT OUGHTA LEARN YA SOME MANNERS!
MEL, CALM DOWN!
REMEMBER YOUR CONDITION!
SCREW MY 'CONDITION'! I'LL TAKE ON THOSE PUNKS ANY OL' DAY OF THE WEEK!
HOW DARE THEY MESS WITH ONE OF MY EMPLOYEES!
ONLY I CAN DO THAT!
(PSST! ELLIOT! OPEN THE CAR DOOR...PASSENGER SIDE)...
HUH? OH, SURE...
?!? WHAT'S ALL THIS?
YOU'RE WAY TOO AGITATED TO DRIVE...
NOW GIVE ME THE KEYS...
LIKE HELL I WILL!
I FEEL FINE!
I'M JUST A LITTLE DISGUSTED WITH TODAY'S YOUTH, IS ALL!
I'LL BE DRIVING MY OWN DAMNED CAR, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
NOW GET IN!

LATER.
...SO WHY ARE YOU SO HOT FOR THAT J-LO BROAD ANYWAY?
SHE LOOKS FAT TO ME...
NUH-UH! SHE'S PERFECT!
OH YEAH, SHE'S ALMOST AS "PERFECT" AS PAULA ABDUL! HA-HA!
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF HALLE BERRY?
SHE'S OKAY. I'D GIVE HER A "B".
A "B", HUH? WHAT A TOUGH TASK-MASTER!
HEY, I GOT STANDARDS!
OH? IS THAT WHY I NEVER SEE YOU WITH A GIRL? NONE OF THEM MEET YOUR "STANDARDS"? HA HA!
HMPF.
...POSADA BETTER THAN PIAZZA? ARE YOU NUTS?
HOW DARE THEY MESS WITH ONE OF MY EMPLOYEES
HE IS!
YOU ARE NUTS! GET OUT OF THE CAR!
PIAZZA'S A MET, AND THE METS SUCK...
GET OUT OF THE CAR!
UH-OH... I GOT GREASE STAINS ON MY SHIRT...
WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT THOSE ONION RINGS?!
YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THEM LEAKING!
?!? WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR SHIRT?
DON'T ASK!
SURE, KID! FOLLOW ME..
UH, MEL? CAN I TALK TO YOU FOR A SECOND? IN PRIVATE?
SO, WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, KIDDO?
WELL, I'VE, UH, BEEN DOING SOME THINKING...
YES? AND?
AND I, UH, WAS WONDERING HOW YOU'D FEEL ABOUT...
>GULP!<
...DOING A SERIES OF GAGS ABOUT BAD AIRLINE FOOD...
AIRLINE FOOD?!
WHY, THAT'S BRILLIANT!
GET TO WORK ON IT RIGHT AWAY!
END

Peter Bagge, Writer; Bill Wray, Artist & Letterer; Joanne Bagge: Colorist

Peter Bagge, Writer; Bill Wray, Artist & Letterer; Joanne Bagge, Colorist


THE PEERLESS PENCILLER®
CREATED BY ALFRED POST
IN BEWARE... THE TARANTULA!
HARK! WHAT'S THIS?
HELP! NO! LEAVE ME BE!
ONCE YOU'VE TAKEN A GANDER AT MY SAMPLES, YOU WILL SEE FOR YOURSELF THAT THE WORLD SHALL BE MINE!
NO! NO! I REFUSE!
MAD TARANTULA! LEAVE PRINCESS CARRIE ALONE!
MIND YOUR BUSINESS, YOU MEDDLESOME-- OOF!
BASH
JUSTICE PREVAILS!
CURSE YOU, PEERLESS PENCILLER!
WOOSH
OH, PEERLESS PENCILLER, WHAT WOULD I HAVE DONE WITHOUT YOU?
THINK NOTHING OF IT, PRINCESS...
PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME HERE ALONE IN MY JERSEY CITY APARTMENT, PEERLESS PENCILLER!
I NEED YOU!
I HAVE NO CHOICE, PRINCESS! I HAVE OTHER DUTIES TO PERFORM...
SOME DAY SHE'LL UNDERSTAND...

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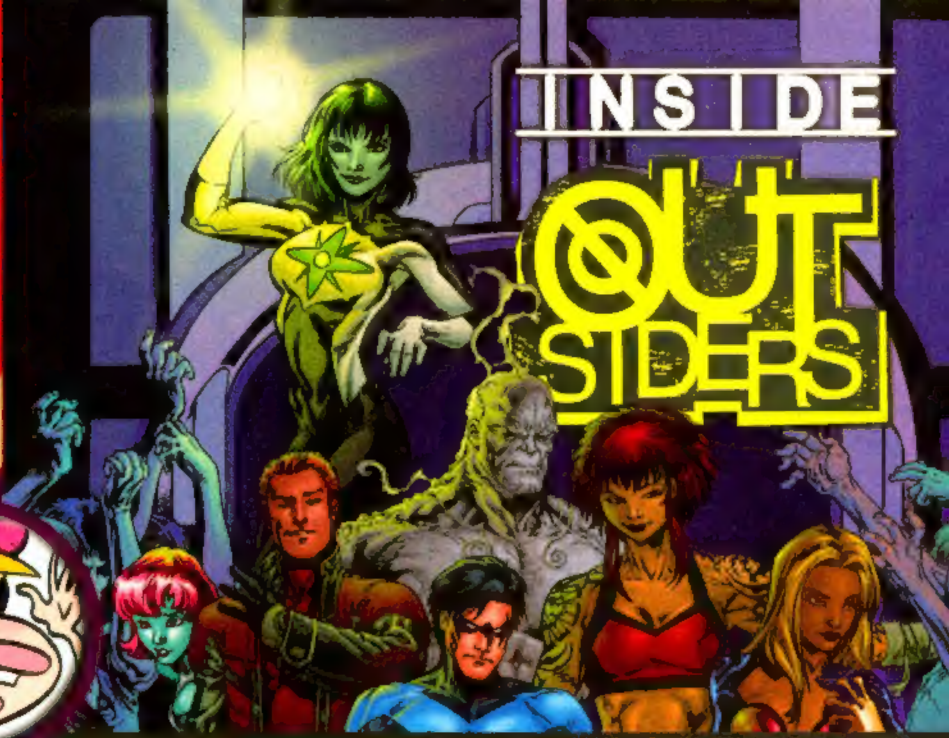
This Month's Cover by...
PETER BAGGE



OUTSIDERS #1 (June 2003)

When saving the world's a dirty job, you'll find the OUTSIDERS in the thick of it! **Judd Winick** (GREEN LANTERN, GREEN ARROW), **Tom Raney** (*Thor*) and **Scott Hanna** (*Spider-Man*) take you inside the new team – featuring Nightwing, Arsenal, Jade, and Metamorpho. Plus some power-packed newbies – who are taking the fight to the bad guys this summer!

Next Month in...

Sweatshop #2

Now that you've met the cast, find out which one stabs Mel in the back in "A Traitor in Our Midst!" And it's Carrie's big break when she's contacted by a women's cable channel to develop a new show!

The Hot List THIS MONTH

GREEN ARROW #23 / GREEN LANTERN #162

The 6-part weekly storyline "Black Circle: Urban Knights" begins. There's a mystery to be solved, an intergalactic crime organization to take down, but can Kyle and Ollie overcome their differences to get the job done?

SWEATSHOP #1

A new series from Pete Bagge, creator of the outrageously funny *Hate!* Mel Bowling is a nationally syndicated cartoonist who hasn't touched his strip in years, instead (ab)using a stable of aspiring young artists.

THE LEGION #19

New art team Chris Batista and Mark Farmer kick off the 5-part storyline "Dream Crime!" Saturn Girl visits Titan in search of a cure, while Dreamer's experiments with the Titanet reveal the rising of an ancient darkness.

SUPERMAN: RED SON #1

What if, instead of Kansas, the infant Kal-El had landed in the USSR? Find out in this long-awaited 3-part Prestige Format miniseries from Mark Millar, Dave Johnson, Kilian Plunkett, and Andrew Robinson.

SIGNED AND DELIVERED

Astrology rules! At least, we hear it will when **Keith Giffen** (JUSTICE LEAGUE, SUICIDE SQUAD), **Colleen Doran** (ORBITER) and **Bob Wiacek** (ORION) subject Earth to REIGN OF THE ZODIAC this summer. Our fortune cookies say this new monthly about twelve warring houses from a distant planet is a surefire sci-fi *sun*-sation, so all signs should point you to your comics retailer! (P.S. Watch out for Virgos!)

WORKING FOR THE WEEK

They say that comedy is king, but it took a guy from Queens to pen the adventures of the JLA's greatest fan, who spends a week in the Watchtower armed with an Insta-Matic and seven snapshots. Expect to move and be moved when **Patton Oswalt**, comedic co-star on the hit CBS sitcom *King of Queens*, explores the lighter side of superheroics with JLA: WORKWEEK, a one-shot special out in June.

DIANA'S NEW DEVOTEES

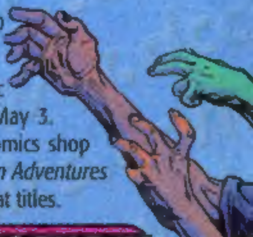
With an island of speculation cast on **Greg Rucka's** upcoming plans for WONDER WOMAN, we've got the skinny on the series' new art team. **Drew Johnson** (*G.I. Joe: Frontlines*) and **Ray Snyder** (JSA: THE LIBERTY FILE) join Greg for his first issue (#195) this August, and what we've seen in the offices is sure to break the comics mold. No mere feat of clay, especially for Diana!

To get more of DC in Demand's Inside Scoop, go to www.dccomics.com/dcindemand right now!

A "HELPER" HAND

Pass this on: we've got a project in the works that provides laughs in the face of death. THE 7th HELPER, the story of an average guy who unwillingly inherits the abilities and angst of his super-powered predecessors, is the disturbed brainchild of *Sheep in the Big City* writer **Mo Willems** and animator **Dietrich Smith**. If pain and suffering's your idea of fun, help yourselves to a copy later this year.

– your MOLE at 1700



Don't forget – Free Comic Book Day is Saturday, May 3. Stop by your favorite comics shop for a free copy of *Batman Adventures #1*, plus many other great titles.

FREE COMIC BOOK DAY
SATURDAY · MAY 3
www.freecomicbookday.com

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